

Crimson Wasp

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Summary: A story about a female Spartan onboard the UNSC Infinity. Partially based on the Spartan Ops in Halo 4. Eventual femmeslash. Don't like it, don't read it.

1. Chapter 1

****Hello fellow reader,****

****As you can see I'm a new author writing about a Halo game. Funny thing is is that I'm not the biggest Halo fan. I've only really played Halo 3, Reach, and Halo 4. So why am I writing about a story in the HaloVerse? One reason is that I'm not writing from Master Chief's perspective or any of the characters really. They'll be there, but I'm writing an entirely different character. For those of you who don't know, Halo 4's multiplayer lets you customize your very own Spartan, from there armour to there gender, rather than simply being a simple avatar for you to control. Moreover, Halo 4 also has a co-operative feature called Spartan Ops that expand the story of Halo 4. I'm writing from that point. Also, I've always loved strong, female characters and this is one way for me to do that. And, yes, while the story will eventually involve her being romantically involved with another woman, I intend to write this in a tactful manner. Also, who doesn't like lesbians? ;)****

****Anyway, with all this reasoning the heart of the matter is is that I was bored and I just had this idea in my head and so I just wrote it out. This chapter is shorter then I intended it to be but I think it gets the point across. A word of warning. I am going to be terrible at updating. So for those who are interested to see where it goes I just want to let you know that this may take a LONG while.**

****Sorry for blathering on, enjoy!****

*** * ***

><p>"Captain", said Commander Palmer, "I think I found our last recruit for Crimson."

"_Oh?", Said Thomas Lasky, "And who might that be?"_

Palmer slides the datapad across the table with a flick of her finger. She patiently waits as Lasky casually flicks through the information stopping once in a while to read the most important details. Lasky stops his investigation of the datapd and looks at Palmer with an expression she can't quite define.

"_You really think we need this kind of person in Crimson? Hell, in any of our teams?," Palmer feels some of tension that she didn't know she had ease out her. His tone implied curiosity rather than downright refusal._

"_Yes sir, I do", Palmer answers simply._

A raise of an eyebrow from him cues Palmer to explain.

"_What she experienced in Skopje, while I admit was scarring, it also is what drove her to do what she had to in Reach. You and I both know that what she and the rest of her team did on Reach was nothing short of a miracle"._

"_Of that I have no doubt Commander," Lasky replied, "Her records and scores are nothing short of impressive, Lance Corporal in just two years, and that was before her augmentation, which by all accounts she shouldn't have survived. But what happened on Skopje and with Team Omega on Reach __**is**__ exactly the problem. Didn't they have a nickname for her other than Wasp?"_

"_Yes sir"._

"_Wellâ€|what was it?"_

â€|

"_Pariah, sir"._

â€|

"_Sir", Palmer said in a tone that she hoped would not sound too forceful or disrespectful, "You asked me to recruit the best for Infinity and for the mission. __**She **__is the best sir. And, while I have no illusions that she won't have problems integrating herself with the other Spartans or staff. Her skills and experience are something that even most of her fellow Spartan-III's don't have, and we have got quite a few of them."_

Palmer carefully looked at the Captain trying to gauge or predict what his response might be from his expression. Much to her chagrin, she was never good at being able to read the subtle nuances of a person's face. What she could see was that the captain's eyes were downcast; looking at the datapad he had set down on the table earlier in obvious contemplation.

_After a strangely long moment, "I've never questioned your reasoning or your decisions Sarah", the use of her first name meant that it was not her superior officer talking to her but her friend, "But I'll ask

again, is a person like her necessary for our mission?". Lasky looked at her dead on; his expression to her looked like a mixture of sadness, weariness, and something else. Something odd. Not fear exactly, but more of an anticipation of whatever will come from bringing in such a figure."_

_Again, Palmer mentally cursed at not being able to read people better. _

"_Yes sir", Palmer said with no waver in her voice as she looked straight into Lasky's eyes, "I do"._

Lasky merely nodded.

"_Then make the call"._

2. Chapter 2

****Hello again fellow reader,****

****So I said that it would take me awhile for me to update this story. It is true but I had time on my hands so I wrote this out. I'm pretty satisfied with it myself. I'll warn you that this chapter like the first one is more introduction than anything else. Some of you may hate the idea of a slow story but for me as a writer I like to build my characters. That way the reader can get more attached to said character. Hopefully you'll enjoy it. Oh, and PLEASE give me reviews guys, not just saying some stuff like "This is crap!", or "WTF is this?!". I'm looking for constructive criticism. I'm always trying to improve my writing. Also, could anyone beta read for me? Is that an appropriate way to ask? I have no idea. I'm digressing sorry, anyway it would be really nice if someone could proof read what I've written and give me feedback. I try to edit my own stuff but there's only so much that one can catch. A new set of eyes would be EXTREMELY helpful.****

****I hope you enjoy this chapter.****

*** * ***

><p>"Hey Jake!" , cried Lars O'Connell, "Any idea who'll be in our team?"<p>

Jake Lawson sighed. "For the third time Lars, I don't know".

"Ah, come on Jake. You're the tech guy and you were a part of ONI, you must know something", O'Connell inquired. Jake grimaced, "You really shouldn't stereotype me as some sort of creepy recluse who knows everyone's dirty little secrets. As I said before Lars, I was with ONI for only about a year. And what does it matter anyway? So what if we get a new member? If anything, I'll be lucky to have someone pleasant to talk to instead of you or the Lieutenant."

Lars smiled, "You know you love this mug geek".

Both men were sitting on one of tables in one of the many huge docking ports of the UNSC _Infinity_. While normally such an area would be highly populated bustling with pilots, engineers, soldiers, and other staff it had been a few hours since the _Infinity_ had

launched from Earth to re-examine the Forerunner planet Requiem. All the work of docking ships and movement of crates and materials had already been done at this point so now only a few remained, including the two Spartans. Though both men wouldn't admit it to each other, the novelty of such a huge ship with its vast open space made them feel quite small and diminutive.

"I love it as much as I would a rabid pit bull", Jake retorted back. "But seriously Jake", Lars said, "Even I've noticed that even including the new guy that you _supposedly _don't know that just makes four of us for Team Crimson. All the other teams have five, even six members. Don't tell me that it at least isn't a bit odd."

Lawson was always known for his self-control, but even he couldn't disguise the agreement on his face when Lars voiced this fact. Although he would never admit this to Lars but he asked the Lieutenant a week prior on this very question that O'Connell had asked, but the Lieutenant had remained tight-lipped and stone-faced whenever Lawson had brought it up. Lawson was the type of man who always liked control, of planning ahead, of knowing all the variables that so that he could factor all of them in and generate the appropriate response. Anything that would hinder that even in the slightest always agitated him, and this unknown team member definitely made him nervous.

But, again, he would never admit this to Lars. He wouldn't hear the end of it.

"We'll just have to wait and see Lars", Lawson stated simply but it sounded lame even to his own ears. O'Connell's face scrunched up in what appeared to Lawson as irritation over such an answer but all he could think about was how O'Connell looked like a pit bull whenever he made such an expression.

"_An ugly dog at that_", thought Lawson wryly in his own deep, private thoughts.

Just then a voiced interrupted Lawson's train musings.

"Lawson, O'Connell! Hustle up and feet on the deck, officer on board!"

Both men immediately stood from where they were sitting to turn in the direction of where the voice immediately came from. Their postures as stiff as boards.

Lieutenant James Young Kim, adorned in his maroon-coloured Spartan armour, was accompanied by a woman whom both Lawson and O'Connell immediately recognized.

"Sir", they both said in perfect synchronization and saluted in perfect time as well.

"At ease gentleman", said Commander Palmer as she carefully examined both men. It appeared to both men that the commander was sizing them up somehow. There was also a look on her face that they could not recognize. A look that seemed to suggest something big was ahead of both men and that she was the only one who knew what was truly in store for them.

But they remained as stoic as ever under such scrutiny, and they were thankful of that in their own private thoughts. They were prepared.

Palmer turned her head towards O'Connell on the left. "State who you are" she ordered.

"Sir!", said O'Connell, "Private First Class Lars O'Connell of Fireteam Crimson aboard the UNSC _Infinity_. Spartan-IV, ID tag: SRS99D-S2! Specialty in weaponry and heavy artillery sir!".

Palmer turned towards Lawson on her right. "State who you are" she repeated.

"Sir!," said Lawson, "Lance Corporal Jake Lawson of Fireteam Crimson aboard the UNSC _Infinity_. Spartan-IV, ID tag: SRS598A-D5! Specialty in communications, operating vehicles, and expert in Covenant historical and tactical warfare sir!".

Palmer looked at both of them for what seemed for both men a very long time before saying: "Both of you know that six months ago that Earth was attacked by a Forerunner named the Didact. If it were not for the efforts of Master Chief the Earth, and the rest of humanity, would have been annihilated. You both know that the UNSC intends to examine the planet Requiem again in order to learn more about the Forerunners, their technology, weapons, what their intent is for us, and, most importantly, if there any other Forerunners still alive. We Spartans are here to make sure that this operation is to go smoothly and make sure that no enemy, be it Covenant or Forerunner, or anything for that matter, hinders that. We were unprepared last we came to Requiem but we will not make the same mistake again".

Palmer at that last sentence had a conviction in both her voice and in her countenance, while quiet both men could feel the steely foundation in that conviction, unshakable and indestructible.

Palmer continued, "All the Spartans here have been brought to the _Infinity_ because they were considered the best. But you Team Crimson, _you_ are the best out of all of them. Each of you in this team brings something to the table. Something that makes you stand out from the rest. All of you have been brought together to see if by bringing in the best, you'll each bring out more of each other and become something nigh unstoppable. Which is why your team is only made up of four members instead of the usual five or six. It's because Captain Lasky and myself believe that you will not _need_ more people."

Both men still stood as stiff and detached as statues. Vanguard of humanity, constantly vigilant and disciplined.

Commander Palmer finally did something that took both men by surprised, but in public appearance they both seemed as impassive as ever, she smiled. Not big enough to show teeth, but still noticeable at a distance. Lawson and O'Connell both noted that she was extremely beautiful when she smiled.

"I'm probably saying things that you both don't already know, or at least suspected", Palmer said, "I hate giving long speeches but it's better to voice the obvious to make sure that everyone is on the same

page. So, without me mouthing on allow me to introduce you both to the last member of your team."

Palmer moved to her side and stretched her arm out for introduction. Both men finally noticed the figure that was behind both Commander Palmer and Lieutenant Kim. One reason why they did not notice the figure was because comparatively she was much shorter than them. Although they saw that the person stood at what they could guess at an even six foot, not short to be sure, but both Palmer and Kim practically towered over her due to their physical augmentations and bulking armour. The other reason was because of the armour she was wearing. O'Connell and Lawson could see that it was a dark, steely gray colour that matched perfectly with the docking bays surrounding and lighting, which probably was the idea in the first place. Too blend in with ones surroundings, not to be noticed until she chose to reveal herself, and the person that saw her was probably facing at the barrel end of a gun or the edge of a knife at that point, too late to do anything about it.

They also could not see her face because she was wearing a helmet. What was unique about it was that it had no distinguishable visor to speak of. If one were to look at it one could describe it as being closed off from the rest of the world. The helmet gave off a feeling of hostility. On a more basic level, the helmet looked partially like that of a human skull, stripped of its flesh and hollow, dead. Although O'Connell didn't recognize it, Lawson did from his time in ONI.

"_Infiltrator helmet_, Lawson noted, "_Those are very rare indeed. She must have done something in order for her to wear that_."

Palmer, with that same beautiful smile still on her face, said "O'Connell, Lawson, meet Wasp".

3. Chapter 3

**Hey again fellow readers! Sorry I haven't updated in awhile but the last few weeks have been crazy with all the midterms and essays. Convenient excuse I know but I'm sticking by it. Plus this chapter was really difficult to write because this is where the action starts. To be honest, this is the first real action scene that I've written so I have no idea if you guys will like it or not (fingers crossed). I've been looking over the traffic views of this story (a really cool feature) and I've been really flattered with all the views. I am going to assume that people like the story so far and interested judging by how many people are looking at it but I am doubtful because no one has commented on it in the review section yet. Perhaps because the story is just starting out so people don't have a real opinion of it yet but I would really appreciate if I had at least some sort of feedback. Moreover, I would really like if someone could beta read for me. You know, look over what I've written and see if there any mistakes or things that don't work well, offer criticism etc. So if someone is willing to do that PM me so that we can talk. **

* * *

><p>For a lot of people, time has a way of speeding up or slowing

down. Jake Lawson was not exempt from this phenomenon. It seemed to him just a minute ago that he first laid eyes upon their new and mysterious team member. Now, Fireteam Crimson was currently in a Pelican being flown into their first mission while their leader debriefed them.<p>

"Alright, listen up team, since we last left Requiem the Covenant has spent the last six months setting up bases and fortifying their positions all over the planet. All Spartans have been deployed to capture these bases, create a foothold, and start driving the Covenant off the planet. Command is calling this mission 'Operation Land Grab'."

"Hey Lawson, did you have a hand in the name? Only you could come up with something so bland." O'Connell quipped.

Lawson merely gave him a withering look.

"As I was saying," Kim continued on while giving O'Connell a look to be quiet, "the place were headed to is one of the Forerunner installation that we sighted the last time we were here. Unfortunately, the Covenant have taken the installation for themselves and have it heavily fortified. We can't do an air raid with our Strike fighters because they've set up AA guns all over the valley near where the Forerunner site is location.

"Why can't we use the _Infinity_ to blow them all to hell from space?" asked O'Connell.

"Besides the large chance that we'll also destroy the Forerunner installation in the process?" Kim said with a raised eyebrow. "The Forerunner site itself is built within a sheer rock cliff in a large valley and the Covenant have set up remote scramblers all over the valley that interfere with the _Infinity's_ _targeting_ systems. Even if there weren't any scramblers, the valley is miles wide and rock cliffs provide thick cover that the Covenant can use for their bases and equipment that even the _Infinity's_ _accelerator_ cannon would have trouble getting through. Even if the _Infinity_ did manage to destroy a few of them, the Covenant can always replace them. There's just no time.

"So what is the plan?" Lawson asked.

"First, we need to take out the scramblers so that the _Infinity_ will have the eyes in the sky again. Then, we'll have to take out those AA guns so that our fighters will be able to precisely hit where they are. Luckily for us, someone had the sense to map the area previously the first time we were here and there is a small pathway east from the valley that naturally leads into a high cliff overlooking the entire valley. A perfect place to do reconnaissance and infiltrate the bases the Covenant has set up."

"What if they know about this area as well?"

"We'll just have to take our chances. Besides, we are Spartans. More than that, we are Team Crimson, we can handle anything", Kim said in a tone that brokored no argument on this fact. "This is an infiltration mission so we'll split into two teams. O'Connell and myself will go south of the valley and clear any Covenant fortifications there. Lawson, you and Wasp will go north and do the

same. Also, we'll all have to find each of those scramblers and set explosives on them. Once that is done we'll detonate them simultaneously. You can engage the enemy but we cannot have them warn their comrades so take them out quietly. It is essential that we have the element of surprise so that the Covenant won't have time to respond. Wasp, since you're the infiltration expert, you'll take point."

Wasp, who was sitting in one of the seats and was seemingly staring off into space (or what O'Connell guessed it to be because she had her helmet on), finally turned her head to Kim and merely nodded.

O'Connell and Lawson turned their heads towards one another and then at their leader to see what his reaction would be at what some may have called a lack of respect. Lieutenant Kim, however, nodded his as well indicating that he at least was satisfied that she acknowledged him.

It only occurred then to O'Connell that for the last five hours that they have been together, Wasp had not said a word to any of the three men.

It didn't stop him from trying though.

"So Wasp", O'Connell said in a light, good-naturedly voice, "where are you from?" O'Connell did not miss the hard stare that the Lieutenant gave him but unless he was strictly ordered not to do so he decided to press on.

"I'm from good, old Earth myself. Born and raised from Dublin. Hence the last name and red hair. Of course, there's the whole stereotype that an Irishman has more alcohol than blood compared to others." O'Connell gave a grin at this. "But, then again, it is true."

"I'm from Skopje."

Lawson's body gave a visible jerk due not only to her unexpectedly answering but her voice as well. Though she was audible even with her helmet on her voice was difficult to identify. It wasn't smooth, rough, lilting, weak, or strong. It was just there.

It was only after the initial shock of hearing her voice did the answer finally sink in. O'Connell must have realized it as well because Lawson could see his grin faltering.

"Skopje?" O'Connell hesitantly clarified. "You mean?"

"Destination in thirty seconds Crimson," the voice of the pilot blared from the front.

Lieutenant Kim quickly rose from his seat and grabbed his weapon. "Alright team, enough with the chatter," giving a pointed look to O'Connell, "get your heads in gear, we're moving out!" O'Connell gave a sigh of relief. Whether or not Kim looked at him to shut up due to the pilot or to prevent him from digging an even deeper hole than the one he was already in he wasn't completely sure.

* * *

><p>Lawson was looking through the scope of his sniper rifle. "So how do you want to go about this?" he asked. Wasp was also looking through the scope of her own sniper rifle, observing one of the Covenant scrambler sites below.<p>

"Stay here", she said, "I'll go down and take them out quietly. If things go wrong, take whatever shots necessary". Lawson nodded his head. She raised herself up from prone position and then popped the magazine of her pistol, checking to make sure that it was fully loaded. She started to make her way down the cliff.

"You're only bringing your pistol with you?" Lawson inquired.

"And my knife", her tone said that it was a statement rather than an attempt at a joke.

"Nothing else?"

"A bigger weapon will only slow me down", she stated simply again and proceeded her descent.

Lawson watched her and by the way he turned his head towards her he seemed to ponder something. A moment later, he shook his head and looked through the scope of his rifle once more. Counting the number of Covenant troops guarding the scrambler: One Elite, two Jackals, and three Grunts.

He could see Wasp weave her way through the rocky, narrow trail. Taking cover fluidly between the rocks so that she wouldn't be seen. Each step was a carefully calculated maneuver to ensure that no move would risk detection. This was her element.

She finally arrived at the base of the cliff, taking cover behind a large boulder, a few feet from the Elite and a Jackal. Holstering her pistol, she unsheathed her knife and commenced her attack.

Taking a running start, she came up behind the Elite, jumped on his shoulders and rammed the knife into the side of his neck before he could react.

"_Taking out the leader, spread confusion and panic among the rest."_ Lawson thought.

The Jackal that was closest to the Elite, jumped back in surprise, scrambling to bring his shield and weapon up. The second Jackal a few feet further away saw his leader go down and trained his rifle to the target. Lawson was ready to take them down with his own rifle. But even as they were reacting Wasp was already in the midst of her next move. Jumping from the back of falling Elite, the added momentum and height caused her to jump forward and roll towards the Jackal with the shield. Before he could get a shot, she grabbed his arm, twisted and turned him towards the second Jackal just as he fired from his Carbine. The green projectile, rather than hitting Wasp, instead was deflected from the Jackal's own shield that Wasp had grabbed. Quickly, while still holding the Jackal between the arm and neck, drew her Magnum and shot the Jackal with the Carbine in the head. The three Grunts, who were now just noticing they were being attacked, dropped their weapons and ran away in fear from seeing their leader and another comrade dead in an instant. However, Wasp trained her

pistol to the fleeing enemies and fired three quick shots. All of them dropped to the ground. The Jackal that Wasp was holding was now in a frenzied panic and desperately struggled against the Spartan's hold. Wasp, who was distracted by the three Grunts, seemed to only notice the alien's fight for survival just now. Casually, she holstered her pistol and snapped its neck with a quick blur of her arms.

This entire event only took about six seconds.

For a lot of people, time has a funny way of speeding up or slowing down. Jake Lawson was not an exception from this rule. He observed all Wasp had done through the scope of his rifle. Seeing her in action seemed to slow down his world entirely for that one instant, an instance of witnessing the methodical efficiency of death. However, Lawson barely registered the paradoxical experience of time in his mind; the forefront of his thoughts was only of his attempt to describe what he had just seen:

"_Flawless."_

A voice came from his head comm, startling from his reverie. Ironically, despite what he thought earlier, he instantly recognized the voice even if it had no discernible traits to it.

"All hostiles eliminated Lawson. Get down here so we can set up the explosives and move on."

"Roger that, Wasp. Heading down now."

4. Chapter 4

Hey there fellow reader! So sorry that I haven't updated in a long while, I've just been busy with final essays and exams and all that. But, now that university is done until next September, I'll be able to update more regularly now for this story (yay!). Anyway, I hope you guys like this chapter. Once again it moves slowly along but don't worry we'll get there eventually.

P.S. Still looking for beta readers! :0

* * *

><p>If someone had accused O'Connell of him not enjoying fighting, he not only would have considered it an insult, but an insult to his family as well. From what his father had proudly told him, he was directly descended from the ancient Celtic people known infamously by their enemies for both their bravery and savagery in warfare. While this ancient lineage could be disputed by some O'Connell's grandfather did take part in the Insurrection on the rebel side. His behaviour and actions soon earned him the nickname (from both ally and enemy) as "DD", short for "Damn Drunk". Moreover, O'Connell's father also took part in the first stages of the war with the Covenant. The son could still vividly remember his father showing him the large scar on his left shoulder he had received from a Needle Rifle. Fighting was in his blood. Contrary to what most people would think about him on first impression this did not mean, however, that he reveled nor particularly enjoyed killing another living being. But he would be the first to admit that there was some satisfaction to be

had from killing Covenant. Like blowing the head off of an Elite with a shotgun from point-blank range for example. Which is exactly what O'Connell did at the moment.<p>

Since humans created energy shielding from reverse engineering Covenant technology, an Elite's shields were basically the same as that of a regular Spartans. Designed to absorb or deflect incoming enemy fire from via powerful electro-magnetic and kinetic fields. And, depending on the rank of the Elite, some shields could take more damage and direct fire than most. But not even a Zealot's shields could take an 8-gauge shotgun shell from such close range. And, based by the design of the armour from O'Connell's unfortunate victim, the Elite in question was the human equivalent of a low-ranking lieutenant at best.

The shotgun gave a deafening bang, which reverberated throughout the open valley, bouncing back from the canyon walls creating strong echoes which seemed to emphasize the visceral nature of O'Connell's actions from both enemy and friend alike. The Elite's head exploded into a shower of dark purple. O'Connell soon found himself covered in Covenant blood, bone, and brain matter. Thankfully, O'Connell managed to block most of the gore from obstructing his visor with his left hand before he shot the Elite. Quickly pumping the shotgun to the next shell, he trained the weapon to the nearest enemy a few feet away, a Jackal, who also was covered with bits of his recently eviscerated companion and appeared to in shock, trying to process what just happened. The image of a Jackal with its mouth wide open might have created quite a comedic image to those who had the time to think about it. Of course, O'Connell didn't have that sort of luxury.

O'Connell, giving a battlecry that would make his Celtic ancestors (real or not) proud, pulled the trigger of his weapon. The shotgun gave another ear-splitting bang and hit the Jackal square in the chest. The force of the multiple pellets and the relatively close distance almost flipped the Jackal head over heels and died before his body even fully made contact with the sand. Three more Elites armed with energy swords came running towards O'Connell with looks of rage and bloodlust clearly etched onto their faces. O'Connell merely smirked underneath his helmet and waited.

Forming in a v-shaped formation like a flock of birds, the Elites came charging at O'Connell ready to skewer him with their cauterizing blades. However, before they could even make within a dozen feet of O'Connell a grenade, seemingly out of nowhere, was thrown between him and the Elites. O'Connell dived towards the grounds getting as much distance from the blast radius as possible. The Elites noticed the grenade and tried to stop mid-charge, but by then it was already too late. The grenade had already rolled to their feet.

BOOM!

The Elites literally went flying into all different directions.

Picking himself up from the dirt, O'Connell dusted himself off and checked his weapon to see if any sand was clogging the barrel. Seeing no obvious faults he went to inspect the carnage. The three Elites were lying on the ground and were not moving. Eagerly, he went to check if any of their energy swords were intact. Doubtless that there

were other Spartans seeking to take such prizes for themselves, O'Connell wanted to be one of the very first to have such a trophy. As he was inspecting the first Elite, he heard something move close to his right. In a flash he turned towards the sound and raised his weapon to deal with the potential threat. It took only a second to realize that one of the Elites from the blast managed to survive, and was struggling weakly to get up. Quickly, O'Connell made towards the still-breathing Elite, kicked the weapon out of his hand, planted his heavy boot on the Elite's chest, and aimed his shotgun at the Elite's head.

O'Connell could see that the grenade badly wounded the Elite's side and especially his face. The right side of his cheek and mandible were badly burned and cut and his right eye was nothing but a gooey, bloody hole. Most likely due to a piece of shrapnel from the grenade that managed to find its way to the Elite's eye socket. The Elite was coughing up blood and was making wheezing noises. From what O'Connell could surmise he probably had at least a collapsed lung, if not both, and was drowning in his own blood. Again, most likely due to the grenades blast. The Elite was making choked, guttural noises. He seemed to be trying to say something. O'Connell leaned in closer.

"_Feerak balog mal_," is what O'Connell heard from the Elite.

"Sorry," O'Connell said to the dying alien, "I don't speak Covie".

Incredibly, the Elite gave what O'Connell thought was a weak chuckle. The alien coughed up more blood then looked at O'Connell with its one still functioning eye.

"_You will all die,_," it whispered in human tongue.

The Elite gave one last drowned, shuddering breath and finally stilled.

O'Connell, with his boot on the alien's chest and his weapon aimed, stood in that position for a few moments as if in thought. But, just as soon as it began, O'Connell shook his head out of the reverie and stepped off. As he was making his way to move away from the dead body, his foot came into contact with something solid, making a slight but distinguishable metallic clink. Looking down at the source of contact, he saw that it was the energy sword that he kicked away from the dead Elite. Excited, he picked up the weapon and closely examined it. It didn't look like it was damaged in any way, which was a good sign. Although it was designed for beings with large hands and three fingers, O'Connell could still comfortably grasp the weapon. He also noticed that at center of the curved hilt, where the thumb should be placed, there seemed to be a switch of some kind. Making an easy connection, O'Connell extended his arm, away from his body, and pressed the switch with his thumb. The sword's ionized blades came to life from both ends of the weapons hilt, making an electric hissing sound that reminded him nostalgically of a science-fiction movie he watched as a child. He swung and jabbed the weapon with his arm, testing it to make sure it worked. The sword seemed to hum and buzz every time he made any sort of movement with the sword. Probably from the fact that the sword with its ionized blades was exciting and cutting the molecules of the very air itself.

This, in O'Connell's opinion, was turning into a very good day.

"You done playing with your new toy yet, O'Connell?" a voice asked him from behind.

He turned to see Lieutenant Kim walking towards him.

"Yes sir. Sorry sir," O'Connell said. He pressed the hilt of the sword again to retract the blades, and then quickly holstered the weapon on the magnetic strap on his belt.

"Nice throw by the way Lieutenant."

"Yes, well," Kim said as he walked past O'Connell towards the scrambler the now dead Covenant used to guard, "I really didn't have time to shoot them all because of their shields. When I said to provide a distraction, I thought you would have done it with less direct means."

"It got the job done didn't it?" O'Connell answered, following Kim. "Besides, subtlety is supposed to be the newbies thing right?"

"She's far from new." Kim said, "Speaking of which, I don't want you to ask any more questions to Wasp. At least on her personal history."

"I really didn't mean anything by it sir," O'Connell replied almost sheepishly, "I honestly only was trying to be friendly."

Kim sighed.

"I know that O'Connell. I'll admit, I was surprised that she even admitted where she came from. I've read her profile. And trust me when I say that she is not in the nature of wanting friends, or even acquaintances for that matter."

It is through this slight admittance that O'Connell understood something important.

"You don't trust her do you sir?" O'Connell asked.

Kim could always count on O'Connell to surprise him in different ways. Though the Irishman fit the bull headed "shoot first and not even bother asking questions" stereotype of a marine, he did have moments of insight that went against such an impression.

It probably was one of the main reasons why he was in Crimson. When he fought, he fought with fury but it was tempered with bouts of clarity and an acknowledgment of his own faults and strengths. A trait that can make the difference between a good soldier and a great soldier.

Kim can still clearly remember the day when Commander Palmer suggestedâ€"noâ€"_demanded_ Kim to bring Wasp into Crimson.

* * *

><p>In an undisclosed UNSMC base, James Kim rushed through the

hallway with purpose. Swiftly weaving to and fro the crowds of people in the hallway, one turn to the right later and he arrived at his destination.

He knocked on the door with three quick but strong taps.

"_Come in!" soft but yet still clearly heard voice came from the other side of the door._

Kim entered the office of Commander Sarah Palmer. Modestly spaced, there was the standard supplies and furniture one would expect of a high ranking officer: a desk, a couple of chairs, a terminal for messages and work. Palmer herself was sitting at her desk, eyes downcast on her terminal reviewing something. Kim stood at attention with his hands folded behind his back.

"_Lieutenant Kim, ma'am! I apologize for barging in like this but I was hoping I could talk with you about something."_

"_At ease Lieutenant," Palmer said her eyes still focused at her work, "take a seat. I have a pretty good idea of what you're here for. It's about the last member of your team for Crimson, correct?"_

"_Yes Commander," Kim answered back as he sat on a chair, "I have a fewâ€¦issues about this recruit."_

"_Such as?"_

Kim hesitated for a moment. "Permission to speak freely ma'am?" Kim asked.

"_Go ahead Lieutenant."_

"_I don't think bringing a person like that is a good idea. In fact, I think it's a terrible idea. Now it's not about her capabilities. Those are nothing short of astounding. But the main thing is that I don't think my men will trust her, even with time I don't think that they, or even she, will want to associate with one another. To be even more honest Commander, I'm not too sure if__I want to either. What happened with her team at Reachâ€¦"_"_

Commander Palmer raised her hand in a stopping signal and Kim instantly shut his mouth in silence. During his entire explanation, Palmer's attention was still focused on her terminal as if what Kim was saying was unimportant.

Kim fidgeted slightly in his seat.

After a minute of silence, occasionally broken by the slight interruption of Palmer typing something, Kim felt his nervousness rising. But, as it just began to rise, it quickly dropped again because Palmer, it seemed, had finished whatever it was she was working on and finally looked at him fully square in the face.

Due to the dim lighting and the low angle he saw of her face previously, it was only then that Kim noticed that she had dark, heavy bags underneath her eyes. Her face looked haggard and worn. No matter how much Kim tried not to he could not help but wonder the reason for it.

"_I understand your concerns. Believe me, I really do." Even Palmer's voice sounded tired. "Captain Lasky voiced the same things you have brought up as well. And I'll admit, I even have my doubts about her. But Lieutenant, she is __**necessary**__ for this mission. If Master Chief wasn't sent to UNSC High Command for debriefing and recuperating of course I wouldn't have considered bringing her. But he isn't available and she is our next best option."_

Palmer sighed and uncharacteristically leaned back on her desk. Whatever she's been through these past few days, Kim thought, it must be weighing on her.

Palmer continued on, "I know it may be impossible for you and your men to trust her. So I'm asking you to trust me in saying that we need her. And, more importantly, I'm also asking you to trust yourself."

Kim looked at her questioningly, "I'm not sure I follow ma'am."

Palmer gave a little smirk, "Your humility is one of your strengths Lieutenant. You know what Crimson is. What it's meant to be. You are meant to be the best. So it's meant to have the best leader. That is you Lieutenant. You are the glue that keeps the whole thing apart. Without you, the structure will fall. I'm counting on you that you'll be able to find a way to work with her and for you men to work with her. Who knows, you may even find a way to trust her, and for her to trust you. If anyone can do this, it's you."

Kim sat there in silence. Not knowing how to respond. Who could?

He finally answered, "Ma'am, Iâ€™"

"_Do NOT doubt yourself Lieutenant," Palmer said sternly, "I know you're capable as a leader. A great leader. Your actions at Arcadia were nothing short of extraordinary. And since then you have done nothing but impress the UNSMC. Even when you've disobeyed direct orders."_

Kim actually blushed at that.

"_I just did what I had to ma'am. What I felt was right. Nothing more."_

"_And you will continue to do so in this case," Palmer said simply. Her tone clearly hinted to Kim that the discussion of this matter was drawing to an end._

"_Understood ma'am. I'm sorry for bothering you about this."_

"_It's alright Lieutenant", Palmer replied returning her gaze towards her terminal. "But as I said, I am sure that you will be able to handle this."_

Kim nodded and rose up from his chair to leave from the office. Just before he turned the handle on the door he could not help but ask one more question from the Commander.

"_Commander Palmer?"_

"_Yes, Lieutenant?"_

"_The reason why you look so tired. It's because of her isn't it?"_

Palmer turned her eyes sharply towards Kim and stared at him for a second. But even someone like Commander Palmer could not keep up such a hard front after the long, exhausting few weeks of paperwork she had to do.

Palmer gave another weary sigh. "Those bastards at ONI love to give you mountains of red tape and paperwork before they give up even just one prisoner."

Kim merely nodded and left the office.

* * *

><p>"No I don't trust her", Kim answered O'Connell's question after a long pause, "Not yet at least."<p>

O'Connell nodded in acknowledgment of his reply and went to set up the explosive. It was impossible for Kim to gauge what O'Connell was thinking because of his helmet. But before Kim could ask him about his thoughts a voice came through his head comm.

"Lieutenant, this is Lawson. Do you copy?"

"I read you Lawson. What's your status?"

"We've just finished setting the explosives on that last scrambler. What about you?"

"Same here. You and Wasp head up to the Forerunner site and scout out the area. We'll rendezvous with you up there. Understood?"

"Copy that. Heading there now. Lawson out"

Kim turned towards O'Connell. "Are you done with the explosives yet?"

"All finished here boss."

"Good, I've just heard back from Lawson and they're finished as well. They're scouting ahead towards the Forerunner site and we need to meet up with them."

"Alright, but how are we supposed to do that? Just leg it? It's about five clicks away from here. Even for us it'll take some time."

Instead of answering his question. Kim raised a finger and pointed towards something. Following the direction in which Kim's finger was pointing at O'Connell's gaze eventually settled onto two Covenant Ghosts nestled snugly in a small cave in the canyon wall.

Even with a helmet, one could feel the large grin beginning to form on O'Connell's face upon seeing the vehicles.

This was definitely turning out to be a _very_ good day indeed.

5. Chapter 5

****Hello again Fellow Reader!****

****First off, I would like to apologize to you for not updating this chapter for so long. I had a serious writers block and when that happens I go to hermit mode and not contact anyone for a very long time. Terrible of me, I know. Anyway, I hope that I can make up for it by giving you this absolutely monstrous chapter. Again, this particular chapter is full of action. Not something I'm use to, but given that this is a Halo fanfic I really shouldn't have been surprised (these things are just getting longer and longer don't they?). And to answer J.S.F Northern Commands question about Wasp's love interest: don't worry. I'll introduce her in at least Chapter 7, if not Chapter 6. Like I said before: I like to take things slow and introduce the characters over time. Lastly, I would like to apologize to Spartan Chris-024 for not emailing you earlier, I'm a total ass. If you are still interested in beta-reading for me, please let me know.****

* * *

><p>The sun had now reached its zenith and the oppressive heat made the valley of rock and sand essentially into a giant frying pan. Although both a Spartan and his or her armour were made to deal with extreme temperatures even a soldier like Jake Lawson was feeling like he was in a sauna from all the sweat he was emitting inside his armour. Looking over to his left he saw that Wasp did not appear to be at all discomfited or irritated from the heat. Both Wasp and Lawson were once again observing a Covenant base from a high cliff a good distance away with their sniper rifles. In this case, however, they were looking at the Forerunner site that the Covenant were guarding from intruders like them. Even someone without military training could tell that the Covenant were defending something very important based on the heavy fortifications built in front of the entrance of the site, the large number of Covenant soldiers, the two turrets placed on each side of the doorway into the Forerunner structure, and the Wraith, although not moving, looked ready to be deployed at a moment's notice.<p>

"I don't suppose you'll be able to take them all on with that knife of yours?" Lawson asked lightly. Immediately after saying out loud Lawson chastised himself in his head. Wasp, on the other hand, merely stayed silent. Wishful thinking might have made himself believe that she did not even hear his poor attempt at a joke. But Lawson was far from naïve. He knew better. Such a statement would have been more likely to have come from O'Connell's mouth than his own. Perhaps it was the heat finally getting to his head. Or the near total silence between the two soldiers during this entire mission that was equally as stifling as the sun. Lawson appreciated someone who understood the power and serenity of being quiet, but he could literally count the number of times that Wasp had spoken with Lawson directly with him with one hand. Yes, O'Connell could exasperate him at times, even annoy him, but at least O'Connell acknowledged him and what they were doing at the moment. This total absence of sound made him feel like he was working with an inanimate object or machine, cold and dead,

rather than an actual living, breathing person.

Just as Lawson was going to apologize for the bad quip, as if by some divine intervention, both Spartan's comm links in the helmets blared to life.

"Lawson, Wasp. Do you read me?"

Lawson answered, "We read you Lieutenant. What's the situation?"

"O'Connell and I are nearing the rendezvous point right now. We'll be there in about five minutes."

"Roger that. We'll wait for you."

Both Wasp and Lawson immediately left their observation point from the Forerunner base and descended the cliff side a good distance away from the base. Just as they arrived at the rendezvous they heard the distinct and familiar humming sound of at least two Covenant Ghosts heading towards them. They instantly raised their weapons at the direction from which the vehicles were quickly approaching them. But they soon lowered them once they saw who was driving them. Though Lawson could not see O'Connell's face due to his helmet he could literally feel the large grin that was surely plastered on the Irishman's face once they came to a complete stop and hopped out of their vehicles.

"Lawson!" Kim said as both he and O'Connell walked towards the other two. "Did you manage to scout out the Forerunner site before we arrived?"

"We have sir," Lawson replied.

"Anything that we'll provide the Broadswords any trouble when they strike?"

"Perhaps. A couple of turrets and a Wraith are the biggest threat but it will depend on how fast they react and how long the strike fighters will take to arrive."

"Can you draw me a map of where the enemy have placed their fortifications and the locations of the Wraith and turrets?"

Lawson stooped down onto his knee and began drawing a rough map of the entrance to the Forerunner site with his finger on the dirt.

Quickly finishing Lawson stepped aside for the Lieutenant to have a proper look. After looking at it for a minute or so, "Are there any snipers that they have positioned?" Kim asked.

Lawson nodded and then crouched again and drew three circles on differing locations on the map. "All of them are on elevated positions or on platforms that they've built," he added.

Kim looked at the sketching again for another moment and then turned towards O'Connell. "You still have some explosives leftover right?"

"Yes, sir. I always pack a little extra just in case."

"Good," Kim stated. "When we blow up their scramblers the Covenant will definitely know that they're being attacked. Like Lawson said by the time that the Broadwords arrive they may have enough time to respond by counterattacking or fortifying their defenses. In order to prevent that here's what we're going to doâ€¦"

* * *

><p>Kim's voice blared through Team Crimson's helmets, "Lawson, are you in position?"<p>

"Yes, sir", he answered. "On your go."

"Wasp?"

"I'm in position."

"Alright, O'Connell, let's go!"

Both Lieutenant Kim and O'Connell accelerated the Ghosts they were driving on at top speed and weaved through the narrow and winding trail of cliffs that led straight to the Forerunner site.

"Fifteen seconds!" Kim's voiced declared through all of Team Crimson's radios. Fifteen seconds before the fireworks would start.

Lawson adjusted his aim slightly of his sniper rifle a few degrees to the left of his intended target, a Covenant sniper perched on a high rock. At this distance, with the addition of the wind blowing strongly from the right, the bullet would miss the Jackal's head if he didn't compensate.

"Ten seconds!"

Kim and O'Connell were closing the gap fast; Wasp could hear the whirring noises the Ghosts were making from behind her getting increasingly louder. Like Lawson she focused in on her sniper rifle with its crosshairs sighted on another sniper who was on a floating platform. The platform was to give whoever was standing on it a full 360-degree view of the area, and the added height would give the person added protection and would make him harder to hit. However, both Lawson and Wasp were stationed on cliffs that were even higher than the platforms reached. In short, the Covenant were exposed and extremely vulnerable.

"Five seconds!"

At this point the Covenant began to hear the approaching vehicles. They were not alarmed, however, but merely curious. They were not expecting other Covenant to meet them today. By the time they saw that the drivers of the Ghosts were not one of their own but their sworn enemy Kim and O'Connell were just dozens feet away from their target. Though there were walls and blast shields in order to defend against enemy fire. Like ribbons of silk fluttering in the breeze, Kim and O'Connell nimbly weaved through the obstacles towards their target.

Five.

Lawson pulled the trigger of his sniper rifle. The bullet rocketed through the long barrel, with a velocity of over five thousand feet per second, surpassing the speed of sound by far; the Jackal was dead before he even heard the shot.

Four.

Wasp also fired her gun. Her target fell off the platform in a dead heap, hitting the ground hard. Quickly, she honed in on her sights on the last sniper.

Three.

The Covenant finally began to fire on the two men. The Wraith, sitting idly before, quickly came to life and was turning its mortar cannon towards the incoming Ghosts.

"Now!" Kim shouted to O'Connell.

Both men jumped of the vehicles as they were still moving. One of them to the left headed straight for the Wraith that was parked just a dozen meters ahead, the other made a beeline for the front entrance of the site where a good portion of the Covenant were closely stationed at.

Two.

Kim and O'Connell got up on their feet and scrambled for the nearest cover. As they did so Kim reached for his belt and pulled out the detonator. Looking over his shoulder he saw that both vehicles had now reached their destination.

One.

He pulled the switch.

****BOOM!****

Both vehicles exploded in a bloom of plasma and metal shrapnel, which instantaneously turned into scorching pieces of slag. The blast closest to the Wraith managed to rupture its propulsion drive which in turn also caused it to erupt in a cloud of blue fire, instantly killing the pilot. The other explosion sent the rest of the Covenant who were defending the entrance of the site flying in different directions. Not only that, the detonator was also linked to the rest of the explosives that Team Crimson had placed earlier on the scramblers and AA guns.

Kim did not even look at the carnage to see if the explosion managed to kill all of them. Instead, he turned on his long range radio to contact the _Infinity_ now that the scramblers were destroyed.

"_Infinity_, do you read me?"

"This is Jared Miller. We read you loud and clear Crimson. What's your status?"

"We've just destroyed those scramblers. Request a precision airstrike on these coordinates."

"Roger that Crimson. I'm sending the Broadswords now. They'll be there two minutes, tops."

"Thanks, _Infinity_. We're hunkering down now."

Quickly, Lieutenant Kim switched frequencies on his radio, connecting to his entire team.

"Crimson!" Kim exclaiming loudly. "Broadswords incoming. ETA two minutes! Hold the line and make sure to find some cover when the airstrike comes in."

Kim looked around the corner of his cover and saw that the remaining Covenant that survived the explosion began to recover and were staggering to their feet. Moreover, the entrance of the Forerunner site began opening, which made Kim's suspicions correct; more Covenant were inside the site, and by the looks of it they were at least over another dozen of them. The Covenant that were inside all came flooding out in order to help their comrades. Several of whom were carrying Fuel Rod Cannons.

Two minutes seemed a long way off.

"Wasp, Lawson! Take out those heavy hitters!" Kim barked through the radio.

Two great cracks of sound rang loudly through the air. Kim saw that two of those carrying heavy armaments were down.

The Covenant wisely began looking for cover against Lawson and Wasp.

Kim's head turned the other direction, "O'Connell! We need to keep them focused on us so that Lawson and Wasp will pick them off!"

"So what do we do, sir?" cried O'Connell.

"Split up! Keep pressure on them and use your remaining grenades. Remember, don't advance any further!"

"Got it!"

The two Spartans sprinted in opposite directions. Both of them making sure to maintain the safe distance of the impending destruction that would come in about a minute and half.

As Kim was sprinting for the nearest rock he heard a faint whirring sound coming from where the Covenant were at. He turned his head and saw that at least one of the turrets managed to survive the explosion and now one of the Elites managed to get in it and was turning its guns in his direction. He mentally cursed; he had hoped that the explosion from the Ghost would have destroyed both turrets. The Shade began to fire in a hail of plasma. Luckily, Kim managed to reach the rock in time before he received any real damage.

"Wasp, Lawson! I could use some help over here!"

Even before Kim said this Wasp at the same time also noticed the Shade beginning to activate and so turned her sights towards the gunner but she was interrupted when the ground underneath her shook violently and jostled her view. She looked away from the sight of her rifle and saw several blazes of green, slowly but surely, coming at her direction. Although projectiles from the Fuel Rod Cannon moved much slower than compared to its human counterpart, the M41 Rocket Launcher, and had a much less explosive blast radius, it did not mean that the weapon was as less dangerous if operated by skilled hands. And it was clear that whoever was wielding knew what they were doing.

Quickly standing, she backed away several feet before she was engulfed by a shower of green. Moments later, the edge of the cliff of where she was previously laying at blew apart and crumbled by the fuel rods. Wasp moved to another location to shoot at the Covenant.

"My position was compromised," Wasp stated. "I have to move to another location."

Lawson also was facing a similar situation. Some of the Covenant began firing towards his general direction. They even managed to hit him a couple of times, draining his shields. Enough so that it threw his aim off and forced him to relocate.

"Sorry Lieutenant. Same here. They know where I am. I have to move".

Kim mentally cursed again. He was pinned down and the Shade was not letting up on firing. However, just as he was thinking on his options a large blast discharged through the air and the sound of the constant barrage of plasma suddenly stopped. Peeking out he saw that the Shade was now in a smoking heap, the gunner nowhere in sight.

His radio came to life. "You're not the only one good pitcher on this team boss." The smugness practically oozed out of the speaker.

Kim looked to his far right and saw O'Connell looking right at him. The Irishman pointed towards one of the grenades he had on his belt.

Kim, despite himself, gave a smirk. "Guess I'm not."

"Crimson!" a different voice this time from the radio. "This is Naval Flight Officer Graves here of Thunderbolt Squadron. We are about ten seconds away with our payload. Suggest you find some cover over."

"Roger that Thunderbolt!" replied Kim. "Crimson get down! Ten seconds!"

Team Crimson stopped firing at the Covenant and laid low against the large rocks. However, the Covenant were too enraged by the death of their brethren to notice their behaviour and some of them instead began to advance on both Kim and O'Connell. The last mistake they'll ever make.

While the F-41 Broadswords typical purpose was for space combat. It

was more than capable of flying and combatting in regular atmosphere. On Earth, the strike fighter could reach up to 1500 miles per hour. In space, it could reach to an incredible 5500 miles per hour. And despite such speed, the Broadsword had advanced targeting programs that would allow the pilot to drop a precision explosive load with a margin of error of just over a metre. There was a reason why this particular squadron were called the Thunderbolts.

The bombs dropped by the Broadwords created a huge dust cloud that easily reached over fifty feet. Team Crimson felt the ground shake tremendously beneath them. And despite them being behind thick cover, it felt to them that the shockwave passed through their armour, their bodies, and all the way to their very core. For O'Connell and Kim, who were closest to the blast, it seemed as though their heads were rattling inside their helmets and both felt the need to clench their teeth in order to alleviate the ringing they felt inside their own heads. Although like lightning it was all over in a matter of moments, the eerie silence and the slow settling of the dust created by the bombs felt like an eternity for the Spartans. Shakily, Kim carefully stood up; making sure that his body was still protected by the large rock he switched to his radio. "Crimson, are you all right?"

"I'm alright here boss." O'Connell announced but it sounded a little unsteady.

"Little bit shaken but I'm okay," Lawson's voice.

"I'm fine," Wasp.

Kim gave a small sigh of relief and nodded firmly to himself. He then turned to look around the corner of the large rock he was standing behind. There were still large amounts of dust in the air which obstructed his view. He turned to his radio again. "Wasp, Lawson. The dust is making things hard to see from where I'm at. Can either of you see anything?"

"I'm looking at the front entrance of the Forerunner site now Lieutenant," Lawson's answered. "Looks like all hostiles are down but I can't see anything that's farther than that."

"Same here," Wasp said.

Kim took a moment to make his decision. "O'Connell," Kim said. "We can't stay here; if any Covenant have survived that bombing they may try to flank us. But we are going to be the ones to advance. You up for it?"

"Always," O'Connell replied back determinedly.

Both Spartans nodded to each other once then advanced around their corners with their weapons raised. The air was still heavy with dust; they could not see anything more than perhaps five feet in front of them. Gradually, they made their way towards the entrance constantly checking their left and right for any sign of Covenant. As they were about thirty to forty feet or so from the entrance, Kim stepped on something that nearly made him lost his footing. Hastily recovering from nearly falling, he pointed his weapon at the ground: it was an Elite's arm—or part of it anyway. Upon closer inspection Kim saw that a large portion of the ground looked to have been splashed with

a dark purple liquid. Like a painter might do by splattering his brush upon a blank canvas. Kim grimaced, he was glad that the dust prevented him from seeing anything. He turned back towards the entrance. Finally, Kim reached the end of the dust cloud and saw O'Connell waiting for him at the doorway of the Forerunner site.

Kim activated his radio once again. "Lawson, Wasp. Looks like all bad guys are down."

"Does that mean mission complete, sir?" Lawson inquired.

"Not yet. The final objective is to investigate the facility and make sure that all Covenant have been eliminated so that the scientists can research it. So both of you get down here."

"Roger that," Lawson acknowledged.

After a few minutes of waiting all of Team Crimson finally entered the Forerunner construct that the Covenant had so vehemently protected. The sleek metal arcs, bright lighting, and silvery components that made the inside structure were a vast stark contrast to that of the outside. Crimson moved further down the hallway to see what appeared to be a large oval-shaped chamber with two levels that could be reached through ramps. Kim signalled to both Lawson and Wasp to head up the upper level. The Spartans then split up, two by two, each taking a different level. O'Connell and Kim went further into the facility that lead to another hallway. Carefully checking for any Covenant they progressed further to find another doorway. By years of training both Spartans instinctually took position on each side of the doorway. Kim counted down to O'Connell with his fingers:

3

Kim pressed the button and both Spartans charged through the door with their weapons raised to find

An empty room.

Not an empty room to be exact. The space had nothing except for an object shaped like a large casket that was hovering slightly a few feet off the air with what looked like a control panel next to it. The Spartans looked at each other; O'Connell merely gave a shrug of his shoulders. Kim fought to roll his eyes then raised his hand in a waving motion indicating to O'Connell to leave. They made their way back to the chamber area. There they saw both Lawson and Wasp making their way down the ramps. Inferring that there were no hostiles to be found Kim cried out, "Lawson! No enemies on your end?"

"No sir. I assume same goes for you?"

"Yes. The only thing down the hallway we went through was just a room with what I think is a Forerunner artifact. What did you find on your end?"

"It's hard to describe," Lawson said in an almost apprehensive voice. "You're going to have to see it for yourself."

"Then show me."

Lawson motioned the Lieutenant to follow them up the ramps. As they went up the second level, the Lieutenant noticed that parts of the wall were torn and crumbled to pieces to reveal rough walls. It was clear the Forerunners had actually carved into the cliff itself to build their facility. "I think it's best if we don't touch anything Crimson," Kim said after his brief inspection.

"Why's that?" O'Connell asked.

Kim pointed to one of collapsed walls. "See that? The Forerunners obviously built this place to last but it looks like nature is finally getting the better of it. This whole place might be structurally compromised and fall on our heads at any moment."

"Got it. Don't go gun crazy in this place or touch any big red buttons," O'Connell quipped.

This time Kim didn't even try to fight to roll his eyes.

Lawson led them through a long hallway, longer than what O'Connell and Kim had gone through to reveal a doorway. He pressed the button to open the door. To put it simply, what O'Connell and Kim saw looked like a giant metal ball floating in mid-air suspended by what looked like two cylindrical rings both positioned directly beneath and above it. The ball also was spinning in a slow, almost leisurely, clockwise direction. The languidness it gave off was compounded more so from the soft orange light pulsating every few seconds. The light itself was being emitted through numerous holes peppered on the surface like a golf ball. It was similar to that of those spinning LED light ball toys that a parents buy for their children.

"Any idea on what it could be?" asked Kim.

"I'm probably guessing," Lawson responded. "But it could be what's powering this place. I mean, we haven't found anything else that remotely looks like a power source. Unless this facility is getting its power somewhere else. But like I said, I'm only speculating sir."

"No Lawson. That's a good assumption. Well, it's best just to leave it alone. Let the scientists study it."

"So mission accomplished sir?" O'Connell asked.

"Looks like it. I'm calling it in. I'll have _Infinity_ arrange for a pick up."

O'Connell gave a whoop at this. Lawson visibly shook his head. Wasp stayed the quiet observer.

"_Infinity_, this is Lieutenant Kim. Reporting in to say mission accomplished. All Covenant forces have been eliminated and the Forerunner facility has been secured. Requesting pick up, over."

"This is Miller here. Great job Crimson! I'm sending a Pelican on your way. ETA: ten minutes, tops."

Another voice came from Kim's radio. A familiar one. "Impressive work out there Crimson."

If one looked closely enough, he or she would notice Kim slightly stiffen. "Commander Palmer."

Palmer continued on. "You're the first one to report in on a successful mission. I expect nothing less from you and your team. Keep it up." And then she was gone, left just as abruptly as she arrived.

"Well Crimson," it was Miller this time, sounding nearly bewildered yet amused at the same time. "I've never heard Commander Palmer compliment anyone before, so not a bad day at the office. See you back on _Infinity_."

Despite his professional nature, Kim could not help the small smile on his face. He turned towards his team, "Alright Crimson. Pick-up is in twenty minutes. Let's go and wait outside."

Lieutenant Kim began leading his team through the long hallways of the Forerunner facility. Both Lawson and O'Connell immediately followed him but Wasp took one last look at behind her. Although there the place had been cleared of any hostiles she could not help but feel a sense of danger about this place. She felt it as soon as she first step foot in this place. It was as if the decaying walls of the place itself were bearing down on her, telling her that she was _not_ welcome. Rather than a place for research it felt like a tomb. She turned her head forward and followed her teammates, the shadow of Crimson trailing behind them.

6. Chapter 6

****Dear Fellow Reader,****

****Hello once again! Did you think I was dead? Hardly, but I will admit that I spent a lot more time writing this chapter than I should have. For that I apologize. Unfortunately, I can't promise that I'll be able to update any quicker now that classes have begun again. But this story will get finished. I promise you on that. Hopefully this chapter will satiate your appetite for the moment. Special thanks to Spartan Chris-024 for beta-reading for me and I hope he will continue to do so for the future. And also to J.S.F. Northern Command, who has frequently messaged me on what's going to happen next. This may not answer or fully satisfy you J.S.F. but I do sincerely hope you like this.****

****Lastly, and I should have done written this in the first chapter, I DO NOT own or have any rights to the property of the Halo universe or games. They belong solely to 343 Industries. I'm just writing for my own enjoyment.****

*** * ***

><p>Parg Vol marched briskly through the halls of the ship, practically barrelling through all the crew members that failed to get out of his way in time. Shortly thereafter, he reached the helm of the ship and found who he was looking for.<p>

"Shipmaster!" Vol said in a hurried but still respectful tone.

The leader of the Covenant Remnant, Jul 'Mdama, stood in the main centre of operations of his entire fleet. He was gazing at one of the large screens that showed the positions of his ships and of the planet Requiem itself.

Without even turning his head to look at him, "What is it?"

"We have been getting reports from our bases stationed all over Requiem. They're being slaughtered by the humans!" Vol said, the last word spitted out with intense venom.

"I know," 'Mdama replied simply, "the ships sensors detected their presence hours ago".

Vol reeled his head back from this as if the commander's statement itself physically struck him.

"You knew?!" Vol shouted, unable to hide the incredulity and rapidly growing anger inside him. "Then why have we not intercepted their ship? Or at least warn those planetside of the danger? Why?"

"It was a necessary sacrifice," 'Mdama calmly stated. "If I had ordered a strengthening of forces on the planet or a mass retreat before the humans had even attacked it would have been too suspicious."

'Mdama turned to face his comrade. "It needed to look like that the humans caught us by surprise. Make them believe that they defeated a large portion of our forces and that we have retreated for the moment to lick our wounds like some wounded _de'erjok_."

From the clicking of Vol's mandibles, 'Mdama could see that comprehension was dawning on him. He continued on, "You know that the reason the Didact commanded us to stay here was because the Librarian had something vital that he needed. He placed his faith in _us_. I know how you and our brethren wavered from doubt when we learned that the Didact was defeated at the hands of the Demon—| how you still doubt our cause."

Vol cast his head downwards in shame. He lurched back up again in surprise when he felt a gentle but firm hand on his shoulder.

"Do not bow your head in guilt, _sho'a_. For I also had such doubts. But before the Didact had left for Earth he gave me something: a gift."

Vol saw 'Mdama pull out an object from his other hand and raised it to their eye levels. The object was cylindrical in shape; nearly a foot in length and its diameter was quite large. Large enough that the sangheili's fingers barely managed to touch each other when wrapped around it. Vol could tell that the object was Forerunner in origin from the silvery metal that brightly reflected the lights from the room and the glowing thin orange lines flowing throughout the object in an elaborate design.

"This, _sho'a_," 'Mdama almost whispered in reverence. "This is the catalyst to victory against the humans. And will lead to our rightful place at the Didact's side."

* * *

><p>Tam Grier was having a bad day. She was thinking aboutâ€|her
again.

It's not like she wanted to. Hell, she didn't even want to think of her name, let alone say it out loud. However, whether she was immersed in her work, or when she had a moment to herselfâ€" _especially_ when she had a moment to herselfâ€" that person would come barreling through the forefront of her mind unannounced and demanding her attention. Moreover, the subject in question brought a tidal wave of emotion that left Tam floundering and physically left her gasping for air. Which was happening to her right now.

Tam struggled to breathe; her heart felt like it was trying to burst out of her chest. Her lungs were having trouble deciding whether to collapse on her or not. Her arm shot out, desperately trying to grab anything to steady herself from her legs that were becoming jelly.

This was turning out to be one of the bad ones.

Damn it, she thought. _Not here, not nowâ€|_

Her anger demanded to scream and hit something; her grief wanted to just lie down, curl into a ball, and cry until it hurt; her dignity and rationality reminded her to move on and not embarrass herself by causing a scene.

Tam closed her eyes and started taking slow, deep breaths.

Just focus on your breathing and nothing else. Focus on the feeling of your diaphragm expanding and contracting when you breathe. Focusâ€|

Breathe in, breathe out, breathe in, breathe outâ€|

All of her concentration was centred on this simple, repetitive action. Gradually, her consciousness entered into a state of sweet, blank, nothingness. All thoughts, emotions, and memories gradually ebbed away back into the black oblivion of the subconscious.

In...Outâ€|

To Tam it felt like hours of her just breathing slowly to calm herself. Eventually, her heartbeat decelerated to an even pace and her chest no longer felt like it would implode. Her body began to stabilise itself; her legs becoming strong again.

Tam opened her eyes and let out a long, steady breath of relief.

Thank God no one was around to see that, she thought, grimacing. She could only be glad that those yoga lessons she frequently went to also included some meditation techniques. Sydney always joked to her that she had anxiety issues. That without the meditation, and more than a little coercing from Sydney's part, they would never have had a date together, much less than sleep with one anotherâ€"

Tam gritted her teeth.

Shit.

Not again.

Damn you Syd. You had to even take this from me.

"Dr. Grier?"

She whipped her head around in the direction of the owner's voice. She saw that it was Private Edward Montague looking at her concernedly.

Edward (Ed or Eddie to his friends) stood at nearly six feet in height and was twenty-three years of age. Despite this, his outward appearance suggested more boy than actual man. He had what most would describe as childish features to his face. He had curly locks of blonde hair, hazelnut eyes. Moreover, he had sensitive looking cheeks that were almost cherubic and a button nose that further added to the illusion. It was no wonder that most of his fellow marines gave him the moniker "Romeo", or "Angel". Even "Baby Face" for those more cruelly inclined. But Edward Montague always took these things in stride. He always had a congenial and warm aura around him that people could immediately recognize once they saw his smile that disarmed even the most unsociable of people.

Tam instantly straightened upright and put on what she hoped to be a cheerful smile.

"Everything's fine Ed. I think I just had a bit of a dizzy spell. It happens to me sometimes. Don't worry, I'm fine."

Tam could taste the lies that were spewing out of her mouth and feel them dripping all over her body. Such a bitter and acrid tanginess to it.

Edward Montague may be nowhere near as smart as someone like Dr. Grier. But he could smell bullshit a mile away. And Dr. Grier had just dropped a whole dump truck full of it.

He also wasn't afraid to call it as such.

"Really Dr. Grier?" he said with a raised eyebrow. "'Cause it seems to me that you are not fine. Far from it. You look like Jacob Marley!"

It was Tam's turn to raise an eyebrow.

"Who?"

"You know. The ghost from A Christmas Carol. Scrooge's dead friend who tells him that three other ghosts are coming. He's bound in all these chains and he has a handkerchief tied about his jaws to keep it from hanging wide open!"

"Eddie. I fail to see how I, in any way, resemble a slack-jawed apparition who has a BDSM fetish." She intoned in a way that implied, "You better make your point, or else." The ironic thing was that Tam felt grateful towards Edward, only in regards to that the pain she was feeling earlier was now turning into irritation, which was

directed towards the young soldier

Edward began to fluster. "I don't mean literally Doc"well, maybe I do. I mean"

He was distinctly aware that he was sweating profusely now from the evil glare he was getting from the seemingly innocent woman.

"What I mean to say is Doc," Edward said cautiously, with his arms raised and palms open in a classic gesture of appeasement. "You look as pale as a ghost and you've got such a gaunt looking face on you right now. Almost like you're"haunted by something."

She gave him a confused look. Edward inwardly gave a sigh of relief. He had bought himself some time from being strangled.

"When I was a kid my mom used to read me stories all the time. Including A Christmas Carol. And one of the things that always stuck with me was Marley. Every time he was introduced I had such a vivid picture in my head. Chains wrapped around him, weighing him down so much that he dragged his feet. A dirty handkerchief wrapped around his jaw in a neat little knot on top. But what I always imagined the most, and the most strongly, is the look on his face that would be forever etched on his face."

"And what would that be?" Tam whispered.

Never had Edward heard such a question asked so quietly, so intensely.

It caused him to hesitate.

"That he knew that he would never, ever, be happy again. You had that face I always imagined when I first entered the room."

In a flash, a mask of pain covered the young scientist's face. Tears welled up in the corner of her eyes and her body started to lurch over.

Edward moved to support her, but she raised her hand to stop him.

"It's okay, Ed". Tam said in short, laboured breaths. "I"I just need a moment."

And so the soldier waited for the woman in pain to compose herself once again. Tam wiped the tears from her eyes with her sleeve and rubbed her face with her hands a few times, all the while taking deep breaths. To Edward's surprise, it did not take Tam very long for her to create an image of normalcy, or close to it anyway, instead of a person in sheer anguish. To him, it meant that this beautiful, young woman had had this pain for quite a long while. How else could she be able to create the facade that everything was fine so quickly? That whatever was causing her such distress forced her to make methods of quickly calming herself; why else, from the sagging of her shoulder, and hollow look in her eye, that she looked totally, utterly, exhausted?

"I'm sorry for doing this to you Doctor Grier." Edward said guiltily.

Tam shook her head. "It's not your fault Eddie. Iâ€¦ I've had some things happen to me about a year back. I guess I'm not completely over it yet."

"Do you need someone to talk to? I'm always willing to lend an ear. You know that right?"

Tam gave a smile, but slightly strained one. "I know Ed. And thank you for that. But please don't take this the wrong way; it's not that I have anything against you, not at all. It's just that I prefer to keep this to myself. I justâ€¦ I just want to be alone for now. Am I making any sense?" the expression on her face was communicating to him that she was earnestly begging him to understand.

He nodded in acquiescence.

"It's okay Doc. I get it. Don't worry. My offer still stands regardless.

The strain in Tam began to loosen and her smile became fuller. "Thank you".

At this, the soldier gave an even bigger smile, grin really, back to the doctor. "Hell Doc, even if you want to be alone right now. That doesn't mean we can't be alone 'together', right?"

At this Tam gave a loud and heartfelt laugh. She hadn't laughed like that in a long while. The weight and weariness of it all was being lifted, if only for a moment. It felt good.

"Thank you Ed", she said again. "Justâ€¦_Thank you_. I really needed that." She hoped that Edward could understand how much significance she was putting into the phrase. She could not find the words to properly convey her gratitude towards the soldier in making this whole situation a bit more bearable.

"Hey come on Doc, I'm being serious here", Edward said still grinning.

But both knew better.

"I appreciate the offer Edward Montague. But you know that I don't swing that way". Tam said teasingly.

The soldier shrugged. "You just haven't met the right guy yet. Give me a chance and I'm sure that I can change your mind."

"Even if I am willing, isn't there some military rule forbidding fraternization?"

"Some rules are made to be broken. And besides, they're talking about military fraternization, not between soldiers and scientists".

"Even us scientists are part of the UNSC", Tam pointed out.

"Technicalities." Edward simply retorted back.

Tam shook her head, but continued smiling regardless. Another thing she appreciated of Edward was the witty repartee's they often had. Although, most of it consisted of him trying to get her to date him, it was fun nevertheless.

It was just then that she noticed something. "Ed, just what are you doing here in the first place?" she asked curiously. Both Edward and Tam were currently in one of the many chambers of the Forerunner site that had been cleared out by the Spartans. The chamber was now full of computers, scanners, wires, and other such measuring instruments. It was unusual because Edward and the rest of his fellow marines were usually stationed outside the Forerunner entrance to repel any Covenant forces that might threaten to overtake it once again. Moreover, despite their friendship, they've had always been a sense of dividedness between their respective groups: the scientists that were sent to research Forerunner locations and artifacts and the marines that were ordered to protect said scientists. The particular Forerunner site that both Tam and Edward were currently assigned to had been dubbed as Site Alpha by the head of Copernicus, one of the Infinity Science teams. Although some of them had voiced their concerns of the structural integrity of the site, most had agreed that the reward for finding anything of value was worth far more than the risk.

Edward looked at her blankly. A few seconds later something in his mind clicked into place because he gave an audible gasp.

"Oh crap! I was sent here because Lieutenant Commander Bane wanted to know the progress on Object Rho."

At that statement, Tam gave a grimace. She glanced sideways towards the large object a few feet from her. Object Rho was a large, rectangular, metal object that was about five and a half feet in length and three and a half feet in width. A grimmer description would be that it looked like a metal coffin, but a bit bulkier on all sides. Though she was a scientist, Tam reluctantly admitted that a metal box floating in mid-air did make for a creepy sight, almost supernatural even.

"My scans have found nothing so far". She answered, frustrated. "There's nothing inside Object Rho, that much I can tell you. At least, nothing that our scanners are able to find. And it isn't producing or receiving any sort of signal or energy that I can trace."

"So it's dead in the water then?"

"I wouldn't necessarily say that. The Librarian built this for a reason. I think that Object Rho is missing something. A vital component of some sort."

"How can you be sure that it was the Librarian that built it?"

"I'm not sure exactly." Tam was a little peeved at admitting this, the scientist in her rarely liked to assume things without any sort of hard evidence to back it up. "I just have this gut feeling."

But Edward, by a nod of his head, agreed nevertheless. Although he knew the doctor for only a few short weeks, the conversations they had and the eventual friendship they formed made him trust her

implicitly when she said something was fact. She was rarely, if ever, wrong.

"The LC's not going to like this." He said this more to himself rather than to Tam.

Tam gave a nod in understanding. "I know what you mean. Dr. Basaan has been harping me for reports every hour now. And all I have to say is basically nothing but a gut feeling on who built this."

"Doc, it's only been a few days. I know you. You're not going to stop until you find something. And you will."

Tam smirked a bit. "Your confidence in me is always encouraging Mr. Montague. But it's not going to win you a date. You've got all the wrong plumbing."

Edward gave a loud laugh.

Just then, both of them were startled when all the computers and scanners in the room went haywire. Screens flickered on and off, giving off static feed, and the scanners began to beep wildly out into a frenzied tempo. The two of them stood still in shock, but just as soon as it began it ended.

Soldier and scientist, with wide-eyes, looked at each other.

It was Edward who reacted first.

"What the hell was thaâ€"

An inhuman, high-pitched, and piercing scream rung through the air, cutting his voice off like a knife. A few seconds afterward. It was followed by more screaming. This time accompanied by what sounded like people, dying.

End
file.